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* LATEST AMTRAK RIDERSHIP FIGURES
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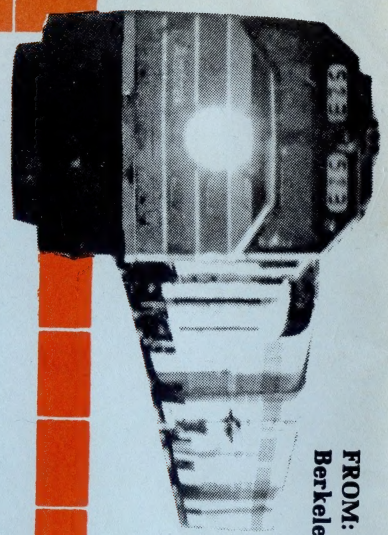

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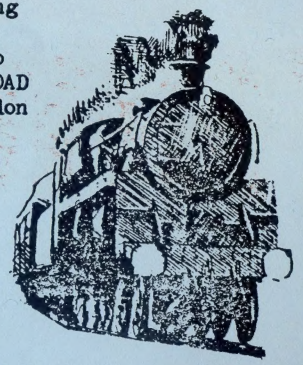

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I want to take strong exception to the statement (RTN 236) that the reason Amtrak hasn't publicly released ridership data for almost a year was that they were storing information to load into the Arrow computer. That is utter nonsense. The ridership data have been available every month, in full, like clockwork, and have been made available to Amtrak's Board of Directors and the DOT each month. They haven't been released for the same reason they stopped releasing monthly "reservations denied for lack of capacity" data in 1979--the bare political embarrassment of the ongoing collapse of the Northeast Corridor (down 24% in August, 9.8% year to date) while the long hauls continue to show steady gains (up 5.5% year to date) despite Amtrak's artificial capacity constraints of limiting all Western trains to two Superliner coaches in spring and fall, and its reclassification of route categories to extract "corridors" out of long haul routes. Actually, it's probably a blessing in disguise that Amtrak extracted its "emerging corridors", because now the traffic erosion in the corridors can't drag down the performance of the long hauls. The EAGLE, for example, would have looked worse had it absorbed the traffic declines of the "Chicago-St. Louis Corridor."

Incidentally, the August ridership data reported in RTN 236 should be read in light of the Air Traffic Controllers strike, which began in August. Virtually every "corridor" continued to show substantial declines, while the long hauls held virtually steady, showing the effects only of the current recession.

Andy Selden
Minneapolis, Minnesota

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ON THE COVER

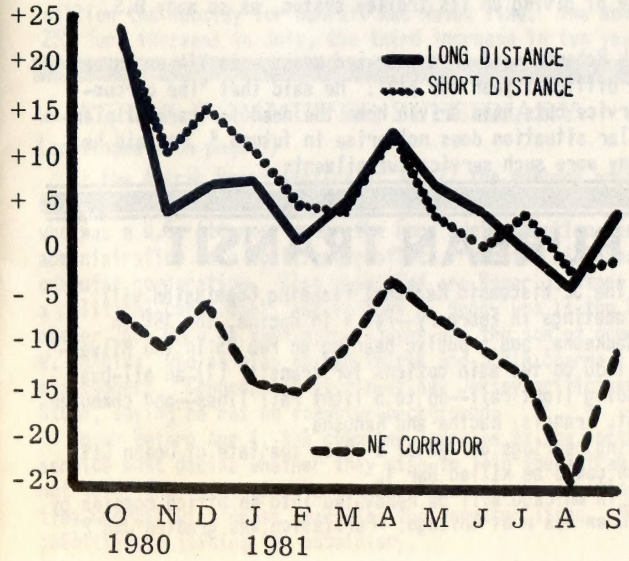
Drawing from an advertisement for the RENO FUN TRAIN. This special Amtrak train, which this year uses Superliner and Hi-level cars, runs between Oakland CA and Reno NV seasonally, leaving Oakland on Friday night and returning on Sunday. The first departure of this season was Jan 29, and the last will be Apr 30. The package deal, which starts at $119, includes roundtrip rail fare, two nights at a Reno hotel, and a coupon book for meals, drinks and gaming bonuses. This is the 18th year of operation of the train. It is also possible to ride the train short distances on regular Amtrak tickets.

AMTRAK COMMUTER SERVICES CORPORATION GETS SOME LEADERS

The Amtrak Commuter Services Corporation is preparing to take over Conrail commuter runs under current legislation. The commuter subsidiary is a separate corporation, incorporated Nov 1, 1981. Conrail is supposed to get rid of its commuter services by June 1983, under the terms of the Northeast Rail Service Act signed into law last Aug 13. This move is part of the Act's requirement that Conrail be either sold or liquidated by June 1983. The selling of Conrail is not unlikely now, as the railroad's economic performance has been steadily improving since 1978, and in the two most recent quarters, the second and third of 1981, it turned profits of $13.8 million and $64.9 million. (Continued on page 5)

ANALYSIS OF AMTRAK RIDERSHIP DATA

Amtrak ridership figures for the full fiscal year 1981 are now available (the Sep figures are given on page 22), and it is possible to examine the trend of Amtrak patronage for the complete year.



In the accompanying graph, the percentage change in patronage (change from the previous year) has been plotted for the fiscal year, Oct '80 thru Sep '81. This is done separately for short distance, long distance and NE Corridor groupings.

Many people have been concerned about the weak showing of NE Corridor patronage recently. The graph indicates that NEC ridership has been off from year-before levels

thruout the entire fiscal year. Long distance and short distance show essentially no difference from each other in their performance, but NEC is clearly depressed relative to the others. There is a general down-trend in all the data, seen in all three curves, but the NEC curve is markedly lower than the other two. Amtrak's official position is that the NEC trends are due to a business recession in the Northeast and to competition from cutrate air fares. The graphs show a sizable upturn in September, but it is too soon to tell whether it indicates a general upward swing in patronage. NEC slack business affects overall Amtrak data strongly, since more than half of all Amtrak riders are generated in the NE Corridor.

RAIL CANADA

THE CHARMING PAINTING shown here appeared in color on the cover of the Dec issue of Vialogue, the VIA employee publication. It illustrates a tale by Rejeanne Blais, a true story of a woman, Mary Lapointe, in Newcastle, New Brunswick, who for 30 years has never failed to wave to the crews of the CN and VIA passenger trains that passed her home on the route of the OCEAN. The woman proved to be a struggling widow, and a CN conductor organized a collection among his crew to give her a gift of a turkey and some cash.

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION has decided not to step in to help save the ATLANTIC that was discontinued on Nov 15.

TORONTO TRANSIT SYSTEM has gained 7% in ridership last year, while large U.S. cities were losing equal amounts or more. In the Washington Post in late Jan columnist Neal R. Peirce compared the Toronto system and American counterparts. He suggests that U.S. systems adopt some Canadian customs, such as requiring transit workers to work split shifts for "immense saving in labor costs." Toronto never made the mistake of giving up its trolley system, as so many U.S. cities did in the 1950s.

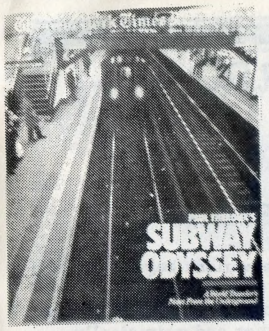
VIA RAIL PRESIDENT Frank Roberts said in a year-end message to VIA employees that 1981 has been "a very difficult year for VIA". He said that "The circumstances surrounding the service cuts have driven home the need for careful planning to ensure that a similar situation does not arise in future." He said he would "personally fight" any more such service curtailments.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

TRANSIT FOR MILWAUKEE: The SE Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission will hold public informational meetings in February--Feb 4 in Racine, the 18th in Elkhorn, and the 22nd in Waukesha, and a public hearing on Feb 25 in the Milwaukee County Court House at 7:30 on two main options for transit: (1) an all-bus system; (2) a system including light rail--up to 5 light rail lines--and commuter rail on CNW Milwaukee to St. Francis, Racine and Kenosha.

NEW JERSEY DOT was holding hearings on Jan 27 & 28 on the fate of Ocean City and Cape May service, which could be killed Mar 1.

DEARBORN STREET STATION in Chicago will be renovated into an office complex by First Federal Savings and Loan Ass'n of Chicago. Permission was granted Jan 21.



NEW YORK TIMES Magazine of Jan 31 carried a major cover story on NY subways--"Subway Odyssey", by best-selling author Paul Theroux. The article is about violence and other horror on the subway, and will hardly win any converts to the cause of rapid transit.

WEST PALM BEACH-MIAMI commuter service, on SCL tracks alongside Interstate 95, is an aim of rail supporters in Florida, and the idea is hot again, with the N. Dade County Chamber of Commerce spearheading the drive. A preview ride in Nov brought favorable response and publicity.

TWO PARIS COMMUTER trains collided north of the city on Jan 15, killing two passengers and injuring 34, after the first train hit a stalled garbage truck and derailed.

NEW YORK CITY will increase up to 60% the number of uniformed police officers on its subway to try to reduce violence on the system. The New York Times in a Jan 30 editorial argued that "More transit police aren't enough." The Times suggests that the status of transit police must be upgraded also to boost their morale to do a difficult job. "The patrolling of filthy trains and dark tunnels --and platforms designed before crime was a problem--is among the most difficult and disagreeable police jobs in New York."

SAN FRANCISCO'S FERRIES are the center of a major battle for operating rights between Golden Gate Transit and the private operator, Red and White Fleet. In particular, the profitable San Francisco-Sausalito run is coveted. Golden Gate Transit currently operates 3 large ferries from S.F. to Larkspur and one from S.F. to Sausalito. The Larkspur vessels run at a deficit.

AMTRAK'S NIGHT OWL northbound out of New York's Penn Station on Jan 26 was accidentally switched onto the Long Island Rail Road's Port Washington commuter line at 3:45am. The LIRR does not use overhead wires, so the NIGHT OWL rolled to a stop, and also pulled loose a power line, cutting off power on Amtrak and LIRR lines. The snafu that resulted tied up morning commuter traffic for over 85,000 commuters. A total of 105 of 134 morning LIRR trains were affected. A switch operator had expected a Long Island train to emerge from the tunnel (presumably a deadhead train), but the NIGHT OWL for an unexplained reason came first.

METROPOLITAN ATLANTA RAPID Transit's North/South line first leg opened for operation in early December.

CONNECTICUT'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY voted at the end of January to reduce by $7 million the subsidy for Conrail New Haven line. The move may bring about a 25% fare increase in July, the third increase in two years.

AMTRAK COMMUTER SUBSIDIARY

(continued from page 3)

At the Amtrak Board meeting of Jan 27 the members approved the appointments of three persons to the board of the commuter subsidiary. They are David W. Marston, who was a U.S. Attorney under the Ford administration, and was fired by the Carter administration in a political conflict. Marston will head the board of the new commuter corporation. Also appointed are Roger J. Stone Jr. of Alexandria VA, a political consultant, and Anthony J. Hope, who is the husband of Conrail board member Judy Hope, a Washington lawyer and the son of comedian Bob Hope; and Frank W. Jenkins, who is also on the Amtrak and SEPTA boards. The full board will have six members. Congressman Florio of New Jersey criticized the appointment of Stone, saying he has no commuter background.

On or before Apr 1, the commuter agencies of the Northeast who have Conrail service must decide whether they wish to join the Amtrak subsidiary. If they do not join, they must operate services themselves, starting Jan 1, 1983, at which time Conrail will cease operating the commuter lines. SEPTA is reported already committed to joining the subsidiary.

AMTRAK SHOT AN ARROW INTO THE AIR

(IT FELL TO EARTH THEY KNEW NOT WHERE)

by Sylvia and Ted Blishak

Amtrak's old computer, ARTS by name, was on its last legs by the fall of 1981. Our attempts to make reservations for our travel agency clients were going something like this: a half-hour or more of busy signals on the phone, then recording and "hold" music for 5 to 15 minutes. Finally a human voice, which would too often say, "Sorry, the computer is down. Would you mind calling back later?" If the computer was working it was painfully slow, often taking 5 to 10 minutes to reveal if space was available, another 5 to 10 minutes to produce a reservation number, and 5 to 10 more minutes to come up with a protect code to indicate that the reservation was ticketed. At any point in the proceedings, we had a good chance of hearing, "Oh, the computer has gone down again--will you please hold?"

It wasn't unusual to spend 30 to 45 minutes on one phone call. We advised clients that we would not know until the following day if we could confirm their train trips, and usually stayed after hours, when it was easier to get thru on the phones. (Unlike the airlines, who will sell their computer terminals to travel agencies, Amtrak will not, so the telephone is our only line of communication.) If it wasn't for our special phone equipment, which will automatically redial a busy number every few seconds, we probably would have either stopped selling Amtrak, or been forced to charge a service charge for handling these lengthy transactions.

Arrow, Amtrak's new IBM computer, was supposed to improve all this. Amtrak expected it to have a 3-second response to a request (an optimistic prediction not yet realized). Arrow came on-line just before the busy holiday season, and two problems with it developed immediately: Amtrak reservation agents hadn't received sufficient training and were mystified by the new procedures they must use to communicate with Arrow; and Arrow, not properly "debugged" embarked on a destructive program of its own.

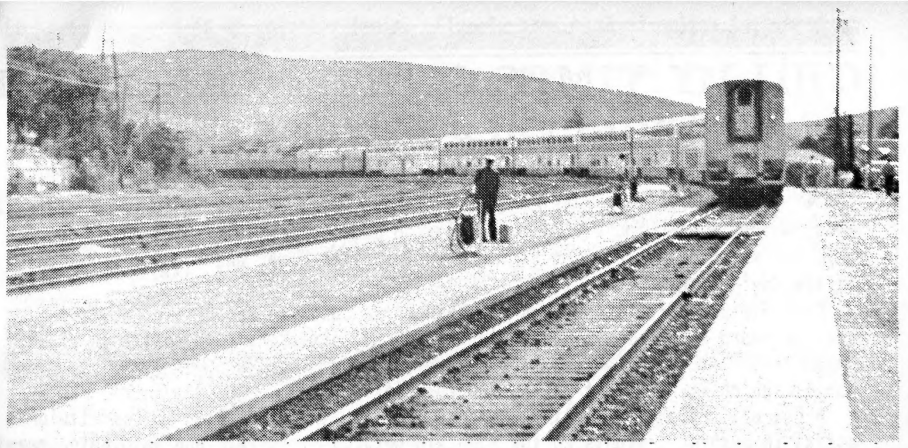
When a reservation is confirmed with Amtrak, it is subject to ticketing by a deadline date, and if it is not ticketed by that date, the computer will automatically cancel the reservation. ARTS had been programmed to do this, but somehow Arrow was not, and unwanted reservations began to accumulate. When this was discovered and the cancellation capability was added, Arrow went one step further and whimsically cancelled ticketed reservations for bedroom space on many trains for the busy period between Dec 15 and Jan 6! All of a sudden, bedroom space showed available on those dates which had been virtually sold out for some time. A number of reservations were confirmed before Amtrak realized that their ticketed passengers had been lost by Arrow, who, in a misguided fit of generosity, now began confirming the same bedrooms over and over again to a whole crowd of passengers! In an effort to save the ticketed reservations, Amtrak stopped accepting first class bookings for those dates, and started to check their tapes, which had stored information from the computer, to locate the reservations which had been inadvertently cancelled. Unfortunately, the tapes did not have complete information, and while many reservations were reinstated, some were not retrievable.

Thruout this trying time, Arrow had more "down" time than its predecessor. This must have been a real nightmare for the Amtrak reservations staff, but to their credit, most of them remained patient and courteous.

Why did this happen? After all, Arrow's manufacturer, IBM, is an experienced computer company! To add insult to injury the new Honeywell ticket printers which were installed in Amtrak stations failed, and busy station agents were writing tickets by hand! Amtrak was clearly a victim of its suppliers in both these cases. As one of our clients pointed out, "It's too easy to blame everything on the computer. People make them and program them."

When we took our Dec 5 trip on the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA (see RTN 236), we were aware that Arrow had cancelled some reservations that were already ticketed--our own, for example! Fortunately, we had reconfirmed a few days ahead and were reinstated.

Before we left on that trip, we asked the Amtrak agent at the San Jose station what he thought of Arrow. "Well, it has great potential," he said with a wry grin. "It has double-sold a lot of bedroom space on trains 15 and 18, so now we don't dare



Foulups of the Arrow computer system resulted in double-sold space on many trains, such as the COAST STARLIGHT here, during the recent heavy holiday season. RTN photo.

sell all the space showing in the computer." (Later, aboard #15, a passenger who had been unable to upgrade to a bedroom at the station was able to procure a vacant one from the conductor.)

In November, a valued client of ours was the victim of one of Arrow's first mistakes. He's a bearded psychologist who has traveled all over the world by jet, but had never ridden Amtrak. When he asked Ted to plan a trip from San Jose to Los Angeles for himself and his young wife on their wedding anniversary, Ted convinced him that taking the night train would be a rather romantic adventure, and booked a bedroom for them. The psychologist told us later that when he and his wife boarded #15 in San Jose, their bedroom was occupied by someone else!

"I yelled and screamed and threw a tantrum," he admitted (presumably after the Transactional Analysis communication method, at which he is an expert, had failed to produce results), "but it didn't do any good! They finally put us in two roomettes--some anniversary! No more Amtrak for me."

Art Ryan, who was our sleeping-car porter on the Dec 5 run of #15, claimed that some Amtrak employees had nicknamed the new computer "Sparrow", as they felt it was "for the birds". Art's worst beef with Arrow occurred on the night before Thanksgiving, when there were 27 duplicate bookings on his sleeper (which can accommodate only 22)!

"Of course passengers try to get angry with me about it," he told us. "But that doesn't do any good. All I can do it to show them where the coach seats are, and tell them to take it up with the Public Relations office. I'm dreading the Christmas holidays, because I sure don't want to go thru that again!"

At this writing, Jan 17, Arrow's performance has improved considerably. "Down" time is rare, and we can often get thru to a reservations agent with one ring! (This may be partly due to the fact that this is the slowest time of year for travel planning; the test will come during the busy summer season.) The time between asking for a booking and getting a response now seems to be one to two minutes--we're still waiting for that 3-second response!

Other benefits we were expecting from the new computer, such as the ability to confirm specific seat numbers in coach, and the ability to waitlist for sold-out space, are still unavailable. And, while we could ask the old computer for a particular bedroom number, Arrow will not honor a specific request--we must take what it gives us.

Amtrak promises an improved phone system soon, so that when the lines are busy for the reservations center nearest us, the call will be forwarded to one of the other centers in another part of the country rather than giving us a busy signal. (We have a special toll-free number reserved for travel agents, which will put us in touch with the most experienced reservations people.)

While we regret the chaos that Arrow originally created, with cancelled and duplicate bookings, and the bad press Amtrak got as a result (not to mention the financial losses when many of the holiday-season trains went out with empty bedrooms after all), we are pleased to see that there is, after all, some light appearing at the end of the tunnel.

CHILLY TIMES ON THE LAKE SHORE
by Kevin J. Gregoire

Wednesday, Jan 13 was a disaster for U.S. transportation. In addition to Air Florida's jet going into the Potomac River and Washington Metro derailment, Amtrak's LAKE SHORE LIMITED was having problems. I was out of town for the day, but my phone was ringing at 5pm when I arrived home, and I got a full report of the day's events.

Pittsfield MA City Councilman and Amtrak fan Joe Ryan was driving downtown when he heard Amtrak train 448 radio the Conrail dispatcher for asistance about 11am. It seems that the lone F-40 locomotive had failed just west of State Line Tunnal, which is just east of the New York State line.

A Conrail freight locomotive assigned to North Adams Junction in Pittsfield to assist in pushing freights up the mountain between Pittsfield and Washington summit was dispatched westbound to rescue the LAKE SHORE LIMITED, stalled about 12 miles west of the city. By the time the engine reached 448, coupled on and pulled the train back to Pittsfield, it was after 1pm. Trains are not usually annulled at unmanned stations; however, there was enough manning at this stop, including Conrail trainmaster Art Fox that a decision was made after consulting Amtrak operations in Washington tc annul the train and to bus the passengers.

The main reason was a complete engine failure including no head-end power, and outside temperatures were in the teens, with no sun shining. Water was drained from the engine and all cars to prevent freeze damage, and buses were ordered. Two buses were ordered from Dufour, which operates bus service for the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA). However, BRTA is so short of buses that it is leasing at least one older model from the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority in Springfield, in addition to its ten Flxible buses and six new GM RTS-IV models. Dufour was finally able to come up with an MCI model about 3pm and crowd all the passengers minus their baggage inside, and about 3:30pm leave to make all the local stops of 448 enroute to Boston. Originally two buses were ordered--one express to Boston South Station, which if it had been available on train arrival would have arrived Boston close to on-time, and one for all local Springfield-Worcester-Framingham passengers. In addition, by 3pm a snowstorm was beginning to make travel hazardous. The train deadheaded to Boston.

In retrospect, a couple of other plans would have made more sense. Assuming a rescue by Conrail to bring the train to Pittsfield made more sense than a rescue and return to Rensselaer due to distance involved, one of the two following scenarios make sense. Knowing the F-40 was the culprit, a working F-40 could have been dispatched from New Haven for Springfield, and Conrail could have towed the train without HEP right into Springfield for the replacement engine. If such a long tow without HEP was not feasible, a replacement F-40 could have been dispatched from Rensselaer to Pittsfield and attached there. Either method would have been easier, quicker, safer, and less expensive for Amtrak than the bus deal. Passengers tend to be a bit more understanding and tolerant if at least they are moving rather than sitting, especially without heat, for hours. It seems Amtrak has mastered the routine, but fails when something unusual happens (example: this and theLAKE SHORE Ohio detour delay recorded in a previous RTN).

Even more disturbing is Amtrak's refusing help from the city of Pittsfield for its stranded passengers. Councilor Ryan offered to open the City Hall Council Chambers to shelter the passengers and/or open one of the Berkshire Hilton Hotel Restaurants so they could eat and stay warm and have the bus pick them up when it was ready. Reportedly, Amtrak refused to release its passengers, preferring

to have them wait in an unheated train. Clearly some kind of policy is needed in this area.

Cause of the engine failure was said to be a burned-out generator.

Due to a blizzard in the Buffalo area combined with a Conrail freight wreck, Amtrak train 449, the LAKE SHORE LIMITED, ran Monday evening Jan 11 between Boston and Albany only, consisting of an F-40, one Amcoach and one Amcafe only. Evidently the RSOs rescheduled all thru passengers the next evening, as there were only three or four passengers on the entire train as it rolled thru Pittsfield 15mins late, looking like a detoured or lost KANSAS CITY/ST. LOUIS MULE or PENNSYLVANIAN.

Moving Pittsfield's Amtrak station downtown from suburbia appears to have had the desired effect of increasing patronage. An Amtrak official told me it is exceeding Framingham (twice its size) and Worcester (four times its size and manned) in patronage.

THE PANIC BOX *

The following is a summary of major unusual occurrences on the Amtrak system during the first week of January:

Heavy rains caused a freight car parked alongside the track (it was there from an earlier derailment) to slide down an embankment and block the single SP track at milepost 245 in the famous Cuesta Grade area north of San Luis Obispo CA, at 1:15pm on Jan 2. The southbound COAST STARLIGHT was delayed 150mins at Serrano siding. The train was actually a stub section, with one engine and four cars, because the regular train was detouring on UP/BN between Portland and Chemult (see last two issues). The sliding freight car was struck by another freight train, causing the track blockage.

There were three other notable delays on Jan 2: The BROADWAY, train 40, delayed 1'52" just west of Lima OH behind a Conrail freight that hit a car at a crossing; both MONTREALERS (#60 2'10", #61 3') when #60 had air brake problems just north of Springfield; and the PIONEER (#26, delayed 60") when engine failed at Ticeska ID, 25mis west of Shoshone, resulting in no on-board power in 13° weather. Train 61 was also delayed 35" at Montreal to thaw frozen train doors.

On Jan 2 the following standees were reported on Amtrak trains: 40 on train 22 the EAGLE leaving Springfield; 26 on the BROADWAY (#40 of Jan 1) leaving Altoona; 50 on train 173 leaving New Haven; 40 on train 303 the ANN RUTLEDGE, leaving Joliet; and 38 on the PIONEER #26 leaving Portland--a total of 194.

Sunday, Jan 3, the last day of the New Year's weekend, was a busy travel day. The SUNSET LIMITED, train 2, was delayed 250mins due to an SP freight derailment between West Palm Springs and Beaumont CA, with no detour route available.

The following extra trains (extra sections) were run today: in the Corridor, trains 60 (DC-NY), 173, 94 (DC-NY), 94 (Phila-NY), and 161; train 73 NY-Albany; and train 8 Milwaukee-Chicago. Standees numbered 417 today on Amtrak trains, as follows: 50 on #35 the DESERT WIND of Jan 1 leaving Salt Lake City; 75 on the PIONEER #25 of Jan 2 leaving Boise; 15 on #173 leaving New Haven; 40 on #303 the ANN RUTLEDGE leaving Joliet; 25 on #40 the BROADWAY of Jan 2 leaving Harrisburg; and 40 on #22 the EAGLE of Jan 2 leaving Springfield; 52 on #352 the LAKE CITIES leaving Niles; 30 on #353 the LAKE CITIES leaving Ann Arbor; 20 on #88 the SILVER METEOR leaving Savannah; and 70 on #21 the EAGLE leaving Bloomington.

The CRESCENT, #19 of Jan 2 hit a truck in Purvis MS, as reported last issue. Train 174 had a blower motor fire on engine 905 near New York, delaying it 65".

On this date (Jan 3) a woman passenger was robbed of her purse in the Wilson NC station while waiting for the southbound SILVER METEOR. She was alone in the

*"Panic box" is Amtrak's term for a quick substitute for regular train food service in the event of some disruption of regular service.

station. Since her purse contained her ticket and all her money, Amtrak gave her another ticket and $25 cash spending money. The thief was not caught.

Monday, Jan 4 was the date of the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR derailment at San Pablo CA in a heavy rainstorm, detailed last issue. This accident affected the schedules of all trains in and out of Oakland.

Standees on Jan 4 totaled 110: 40 on the LAKE SHORE #49 of Jan 3 leaving Elyria; 25 on the EAGLE, #22 of Jan 2 leaving Springfield; and 45 on train 142 leaving Philadelphia.

The MICHIGAN EXECUTIVE, train 374, hit a pickup truck in Wayne MI with minor damage and no injuries.

The SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, train 5 of Jan 3 was delayed 150" at Villisca IA by freezing weather and blizzard conditions: a freight ahead of it had problems with the weather, and then a power switch froze. Train 5 backed up 4.2 miles to Nodaway to run around the frozen switch.

Corridor train 174 was delayed 97" near Landover when engine 903 died. It was pulled back to Washington and engine 911 was substituted.

The BROADWAY LIMITED, train 41, had its headlight fail east of Hunt PA. The train proceeded slowly to Altoona with a white lantern in place of the headlight. At Altoona the engine, #361, was found to have a bad generator. Helper engines Conrail 6043 and 6287 were added, but just west of Altoona engine 6287 and Amtrak engine 363 died. The train returned to Altoona, where all new engines were substituted: Amtrak 270 and Conrail 6286 and 6041. The train lost 203 minutes.

Corridor train 151, using LRC equipment, had a panic box instead of food car because two LRC food cars were bad-ordered.

Yesterday's eastbound SUNSET was running 4½hrs late at El Paso. Yesterday's EMPIRE BUILDERS were both running 2 to 3 hours late. The EAGLE, train 22 of Jan 3 was 3'40" late.

Tuesday Jan 5: catenary power was out in the NE Corridor between Bowie and Severn on the Baltimore Division, from 6:13pm until 9:03pm (track 1) and 2:51am on Jan 6 (track 2). This was caused by failure of a steady rod, which train 400 first encountered. Diesel operation was used between Bowie and Grove. There were delays of 5-112mins to the following trains: 19, 173, 121, 285, 185, 187, 175, 87, 125, 177, 189, 90, 188 and 66.

The EMPIRE BUILDER, train 7 of Jan 3, didn't quite make it to Seattle. Five miles west of Everett WA a BN freight derailed, blocking the single track. The BUILDER terminated at Monroe WA and passengers were bused on.

A warehouse fire near the tracks just east of North Philadelphia caused delays to Corridor trains from 5:07pm to 8:25pm. Fourteen Amtrak trains were delayed from one to 54mins, and 5 Conrail locals from 10 to 52mins.

The COAST STARLIGHT, train 11 of Jan 5, was delayed 132mins in the Cascades north of Chemult OR when transition car 39919's brakes would not release. It and baggage car 1268 had to be set out there. An SP engine and caboose later towed them to Klamath Falls where they could be drained (workers could not reach the cars to drain them, due to heavy snow).

The Arrow computer produced so many duplicate sales for the SILVER METEOR that an extra coach was added to train 87 at Washington.

Train 22, the EAGLE, was running 264mins late due to a late connection from train 2, the SUNSET LIMITED.

Wednesday Jan 6: Severe weather is still hitting many parts of the country. The EMPIRE BUILDER, train 8 of Jan 5, was delayed 58" at Whitefish when the diner, car 34045, had to be thawed out. Other mechanical troubles put it 95" behind schedule.

The PIONEER, train 25 of Jan 5, had engine trouble with unit 228 52 miles west of Ontario ID, and was delayed 205mins.

New Haven Interlocking lost all switch and signal power at 9:45pm; train 60 could not be fueled, and would be fueled at White River Junction. It was delayed 28mins, train 195 85mins, and train 144 7mins. Power restored at 11:30pm.

 (continued on page 20)

A SYMPHONY IN STAINLESS STEEL

by Glenn Lee

Dawn is late in Salt Lake City as October winds down, and it's still mostly dark when it's time to get up for a trip eastbound on the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR. Altho not one for lavishing emotions on early morning hours (my personal feeling often seems to be that anyone who watches the sun come up is a peeping Tom), it's easy to get up this morning. It's been almost three years since a ride on the RGZ, which has become such an important event that preparing for it, as well as recounting after it, are almost as important as being on board.

The taxi hurried to the darkened Rio Grande depot. The old waiting room was closed, replaced by a little bus-station-like cubbyhole in the south wing. There's more than enough room, as the passenger load is very light--perhaps no more than 15 passengers. The depot may be more permanently secure than the train, as crewmen said it had been sold by the railroad to the Utah Historical Society.

On the platform there glowed in the growing dawn's light what must now be classified as a USSO to a new generation of train travelers--the Unidentified Stainless Steel Object. Close your eyes just a minute and it is the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, the train which did more probably than any other to initiate the Amtrak bill in 1970, but which like Moses did not survive to cross over into the Promised Land. As Budd once advertised: A symphony in stainless steel.

A quick check showed the following: Locomotives 5771, 5762, and 5763; combine 1230, ex-UP diner 1116, domes "Silver Colt" and "Silver Pony", flattop coach "Silver Aspen", dome coaches "Silver Mustang" and "Silver Bronco", and dome observation "Silver Sky". Nearby was an ancient Rio Grande narrow gauge steam engine 223, probably the first of many rail objets d'art to be assembled by the historical society. Will one day some of today's RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR equipment join 223? As the TV crowd will say, "Only time will tell."

On board. Sit back gently in seat. Close eyes. Vision of confident "Gray Eagle" strolling to the controlls of 5771, assuring his fans quietly: "Relax. Daddy will take you to the hot springs safely in his EMD-powered, stainless steel time warp."

Whistles, an echo of an F-9 series revving up, and we clatter away from Salt Lake. It took only a few minutes to reach Roper Yard, and we soon picked up speed. It was a chilly morning, and the RGZ hurried thru valley scenes which told us that winter would be on its way soon--from cars to cows breathing white exhausts.

At 8:05am the sun finally peeked over the Wasatch Mountains to the east. The dining car was warm and comfortable, altho as one Denver newsman described it, it was "spartan." Breakfast was good, and even tho the load was sparse, a camaraderie soon developed, a combination of tourists looking forward to a pleasant day and a crew which seemed to like the work.

It's a fast run to Provo, and we arrived 8:22am, two minutes late, and departed 8:29am, nine minutes behind schedule. One minute later, a long Rio Grande freight passed westbound, headed by five big SD units. At 8:37am we passed Springville, and were now in farming countryside, having left the industrial and urban sprawl of the Provo area behind. Pheasants darted up and away from the ZEPHYR as it sped along at 60mph or more.

The ham for breakfast seemed especially good. There was lots of it. A photomural at the kitchen end of the seating area was a good one--a black and white of the ZEPHYR speeding along in the badlands near Thompson, Utah, an area usually overlooked by ZEPHYR publicists more anxious to focus on the Rockies or Ruby Canyon.

At 8:54am we passed Thistle, near the lower end of Spanish Fork Canyon. We entered a bank of high fog, which blotted the sun and covered the canyon with grey. Included in the encompassing mist was an enormous army of hunters--this was apparently "opening day" for the firearms set, and the adjacent highway was lined with hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of campers, trailers, motorhomes and the like--all of which when added to the cost of firearms and ammunition conspire to make the food thus obtained quite high in unit value--double-digit inflation or not.

The animation of a countryside filled with hunters seemed to interest the passengers more than the advance of the ZEPHYR upon Soldier Summit. But the pace was good, and by 9:23am we passed the west switch of Gilluly siding, where a long (7900 feet) center siding begins. It can be a slow grind for freights, but the ZEPHYR took it in stride. At 9:31am we passed a fast, short westbound merchandise freight above the east end of the S curve which is the most prominent feature of the grade on the west slope of the Wasatch.

To our right there was a thin layer of fresh snow above the tracks. To our left, a crowd of 12 to 15 men were gathered about the carcass of a recently slain large animal, which in passing looked like an elk.

The summit was reached at 9:41am, and I made a quick attempt to spot the site of the former shops building, which lasted only a few years in the early 1900's. As transportation critics pointed out, mountain summits are not the best spots for repair shops. Too much raw material to be lugged up steep grades, and too much snow has to be hauled away.

For reasons unknown, Rio Grande several years ago removed the double track across the plateau land seven miles to Colton, where the steep descent of the eastern slope of the Wasatch begins. For four minutes the ZEPHYR was halted at the switch where double track is reduced to one. After passage of a long westbound freight, we resumed speed, and at Colton, under a clear blue sky with almost unlimited visibility, took the left-hand main to begin the descent to Helper. At 9:59am we passed Kyune, where the grade is steep and curvature heavy. At 10:01am we stopped, and after a 3-minute pause moved forward cautiously. A red block. We stopped again at 10:10am, and after whistling off at 10:15am, noted that crews were attempting to remove a large boulder from the right of way with jacks and crowbars. Taking care of the railroad, especially one in the mountains, is a chore that never stops.

By 10:29am, after passing the Utah Railway Junction, the ZEPHYR again was running "right-hand", and pulled into Helper at 10:34am, seven minutes late for the dash across the desert to Colorado.

It's a lot of fun for train buffs, as the line is busy, and in the zone both sides of Green River, quite fast. The ZEPHYR can easily overtake autos on the adjacent highways, and the scenery also is good--high table mountains to the east, and the spires of badlands of the Robbers Roost area to the west, and the Canyonlands to the south.

It's here that it's easy to see the ZEPHYR cars need some work. The seats rattle noisily at high speeds, and it's also easy to see that some of the windows need replacing. The rattle of something in the ceiling, perhaps air conditioning ducts, accelerated as the train maintained high speeds. Removal of carpeting on the floor has tended to increase the propensity of the cars to become echo chambers, individual megaphones expanding upon both car and truck noises to create a sometimes headache-producing din.

It's probably a combination of both cost-cutting and benign neglect on the part of Rio Grande which has let this situation progress. My own dome coach, "Silver Pony", had a flat wheel, and like the other dome coaches, tended to become lively on rougher stretches of track or at curves. By contrast, flattop coach "Silver Aspen" was the most attractive car; quieter at high speeds, and also the smoothest riding.

We passed Green River on time at 11:45am and roared across the river itself, which looked muddy enough to have passed for a chocolate milkshake. A lot of silt en route to contribute to the filling of the reservoir behind the Glen Canyon Dam.

Soon it was time for lunch, and I selected the fish item on the menu. A disappointment. It seemed pre-prepared, and not very well at that. Dry. But the dining car was fun, especially as we rolled across the badlands which I find so intriguing. The Amtrak cutback in dining service became a conversation item in the diner when one woman asked of the steward: "Are you going to lose your silverware and tablecloths like the other trains?"

The steward graciously reassured the woman he didn't think that was going to happen. He did, however, think that "Silver Banquet", the former CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR dining car used on RGZ until the summer of 1981, was "finished." He said it was "parked in a field, everything wrong with it." That information was later contrasted with a report which said that Rio Grande intended to return "Silver Banquet" to service, with the ex-UP diner to be used as a backup car.

The desert drops away and Colorado canyonlands start almost exactly at the Utah-Colorado border. We passed Westwater, where the rails drop from the badlands into the river valley, at 12:55pm. By 1:03pm we were in the heart of colorful Ruby Canyon, with the rock formation I have named "Three Chess Pieces" slipping by across the river. Colorado--it's wonderful!

Aerial photo of RGZ. Paul Rayton photo.

Altho we met nothing, we passed thru the siding at Fruita between 1:24pm and 1:27pm and arrived at Grand Junction at 1:39pm, one minute early. The station didn't seem very busy, altho the land immediately west of the main building has become a small shopping center. A clipping from the Rocky Mountain News (of Denver) posted on the bulletin board explained that the ex-UP diner had cost the Rio Grande $180,000 for upgrading, and stood a good chance of becoming the last "conventional" dining car in the U.S. The article further seemed to suggest that anyone riding the ZEPHYR from Denver to Salt Lake or back again must be a little nutty, as air fares (at the time of publication) were $35 one way for a one-hour trip; while train fare was $61.50 for the 14-hour trip (formerly 13 hours in the best days of the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR. The article seemed to be a subtle confirmation of what some of the rail buffs have said in recent months--that Rio Grande may be grouping for another effort to discontinue the ZEPHYR between Grand Junction and Salt Lake City.

We departed Grand Junction 1:57pm, or two minutes late. It was not a time to relax and truly enjoy the scenery of the western slope of Colorado, as the ZEPHYR picked its path upstream alongside the Colorado.

Around us, the scenery was as natural and beautiful as ever--the weird formations of Colorado National Monument behind us; the stateliness and massive bulk of the Grand Mesa ahead of us. But at trackside the scenery was different. It was California coming to Colorado, and the sad story--beautiful orchards bulldozed away for more suburban residential development. It's easy to see, if one had ridden the COAST DAYLIGHT in the 1960's, what will become of the Grand Valley as we know it now, changing rapidly under the impetus of oil-shale development.

Coal also is important. The pace is being set by long coal trains destined for tidewater. One had passed us at Grand Junction powered by UP locomotives. At Cameo, which the ZEPHYR passed at 2:18 pm, a new loop for loading coal unit trains has been completed. Covered conveyor belts scurry across the landscape. More are planned.

At the siding called Grand Valley, but now adjacent to a town renamed Parachute, the boom is here and now. The town of some 300 persons just one year ago has expanded to 3,000 or more. Many are living in motor homes or tents, and county officials say they cannot estimate the population except by aerial photography. To the south, on benchland across the river, is Battlement Mesa, covered with an array of motor homes. Soon, say the experts, Battlement Mesa will support 25,000 persons!

Water to support both the population and the demands of oil shale processing may come by pipeline all the way from the Missouri River. One estimate says that within 25 years, the west slope between Glenwood Springs and Grand Junction could support 1.5 million persons! Clearly this is a landscape under siege, and with that in mind, it is necessary to look very thoroughly and very closely at the land--and no better way than thru the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR's domes.

At 2:31pm we overtook an eastbound freight in the siding for us at Akin. At 2:53pm, at Grand Valley, a westbound coal train was in the siding for us. All Rio Grande locomotives, but soon it may be different--unlike most Western rail lines, Rio Grande is short of power and has been searching for additional units from such diverse sources as Kansas City Southern and Canadian National.

We arrived at Rifle at 3:07pm and departed at 3:09pm, four minutes late.

Fall comes last to the valley floor. On the high ground, the cottonwoods and aspens have all shed their golden leaves, and show the silver grey of their winter coat. But on the valley floor, the aspens and birches are glowing in a continuous path of luminescent yellow. As we moved closer to Glenwood Springs, more and more passengers on board began noticing the riot of luminescence about us. Each cottonwood-type tree seemed intent on outdoing the other in a quest for autumnal greatness. With not a cloud in the sky, the effect was dazzling.

A long string of John Denver notes and melodies began passing thru my mind--complicated: not unlike the chemists' depiction of an extended molecular chain--and making me feel very hopelessly a romantic. "She's gettin' ready to fly.... Rocky Mountain high!" But why not? So a salute to the "Aye, Calypso" of the rails.

The closer to the destination you get when you are having a good time traveling, the faster things go. We seemed to be nearing the speed of sound when we passed Newcastle siding at 3:22pm, and Chacra at 3:27pm, with a westbound freight in the siding at each, waiting for us.

The RGZ came to a halt in Glenwood Springs at 3:37pm, where a crowd of more than 200 passengers was waiting on the platform. No matter how many times I have arrived it is always as much fun at the first time, and I know that the choice of vacation has been a good one. The mood is very much like arriving in Victoria on the "Princess Marguerite"--something dramatic and emotional if it's the first time or the 51st time.

I climbed to the grass west of the depot and watched the stainless steel time warp absorb its load of 200 souls easily, and then watched as it pulled away, and finally as the last car, "Silver Sky", disappeared into a tunnel at the very western edge of the Glenwood Canyon.

Our USSO had vanished--to the east--at a slow rate of speed.

* * *

Whither, the RGZ?

That's a question on many minds now, as the RGZ approaches the end of its 11th year of operation.

It's an unstable situation, and has been an unstable situation since May 1, 1971. RGZ's continued existence as a thru Denver to Salt Lake train has been based on Rio Grande's determination to keep Amtrak from rerouting the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR over Rio Grande tracks.

In this era of Reagan budget cuts, that could spell an end one day to the SAN FRAN-CISCO ZEPHYR, as SFZ's present Wyoming route bypasses Colorado's most appealing tourist destinations--such as the Aspen, Vail and Beaver Creek ski resorts; and the great variety of other attractions ranging from hot springs to dude ranches.

Rio Grande management knows that if the SFZ, with its thru cars also from Los Angeles via the DESERT WIND, and from Portland and Seattle via the PIONEER, were rerouted via Rio Grande, Aspen (for example) would be only a thru overnight ride from both Chicago and all major west coast cities. That could mean enormous increases in SFZ business.

To train buffs, that would mean saving the SFZ from budget cutters, but to Rio Grande it means a possible second daily section in peak periods, and "interference with freight," a specious argument at best, when most freight trains go into sidings to meet other freight trains.

Amtrak cannot avoid this problem much longer. With the Amtrak Act of 1981, Amtrak now can freely adjust its routes with neither public hearings nor Congressional approval, as was the case with the October 1981 rerouting of the EMPIRE BUILDER in Eastern Washington.

Amtrak must reroute the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR to the Rio Grande line. Rio Grande by present law must accept the rerouting. Only the cost can be disputed, and that goes to arbitration.

When the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR is rerouted, the present RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR should be continued, but as a daily train Denver to Glenwood Springs only, arriving Glenwood 1:10pm, as now; and departing at 3:50pm, 10 minutes later than at present, offering a day excursion from Denver to Glenwood similar to the day excursion on the narrow gauge train from Durango to Silverton, or on board the "Princess Marguerite" from Seattle to Victoria.

At present, Rio Grande operates 3,420 passenger train miles per week with the RGZ (six trips per week over 570 miles of line). If restricted to a daily Denver-Glenwood round trip, 2,590 miles would be operated (14 trips per week over 185 miles of route). The RGZ then would "run interference" for the SFZ runs, which could not easily carry 300 or more passengers Glenwood-Denver on busy days. A short-turn RGZ could run with up to 17 cars, and could carry 600 passengers or more, which would be enough to make the RGZ profitable--something that could embarrass the Rio Grande, just as continuing profits on the Silverton run were an embarrassment.

Political action to reroute the SFZ over the Rio Grande line whould begin now, to plug Western Colorado into the national Amtrak system, and to keep SFZ revenues high enough to allow it to escape budget cutters. At the same time, the classic CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR-like RGZ runs could be restricted to their most useful miles, the Denver-Glenwood run where it could become a part of the Colorado landscape as accepted and useful as the Silverton run.

The situation is a call for leadership. John Denver, how about a ZEPHYR ballad?

Mixed Train of Thoughts

ST. LOUIS HAD its heaviest snowstorm in history on the last weekend of January--two feet in 24 hours. The area was pretty much paralyzed by the snow. And flood waters washed out track 37 miles north of Poplar Bluff MO, severing the route of the EAGLE. The southbound train of Jan 31 was held at St. Louis that night, and was going to continue its journey the next day. Passengers were kept aboard the train, as there were no hotel rooms available in St. Louis! The northbound train was held in Little Rock, with 165 passengers put up in hotels. There were 126 on the southbound. No attempt was made to bus between the two trains because of the flooding. The KANSAS CITY MULE, train 341, was annulled on Feb 1. The ANN RUTLEDGE, train 304 on Feb 1 was expected to leave its point of origin about 3½ hours late. The other trains on the route were expected to suffer minor delays.....

NEW YORK CITY also had heavy snow that weekend, and the main airport was closed. Fortunately, Amtrak is around when other modes can't operate. United Air Lines had a tour group flying from Las Vegas to upstate New York. At New York City they couldn't take off, so the airline called Amtrak for help to get 100 passengers to their destinations on the Empire Service route.....

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WESTINGHOUSE AIR BRAKE Company is still on strike, holding up production of more Amfleet II cars from the Budd Company. The first operation of the one Amfleet II lounge car that has been delivered to Amtrak, on the Florida trains, was on train 81, the SILVER STAR, that left New York Jan 15. The consist of that train was mail car, baggage dorm, 2 Heritage sleepers, Amfleet II coaches 25008, 25009 and 25000, Heritage diner and lounge cars, Amfleet II coaches 25001, 25007, 25004, 2 Heritage sleepers, and the Amfleet II lounge, #28001. A Conrail freight derailment at the B&P Tunnel near Baltimore on Jan 14 caused the northbound SILVER STAR to be terminated at Washington. Since the cars were not turned, the next day's train went to Florida with the equipment in reverse order.....

CORRIDOR TRAIN 183 derailed leaving Philadelphia's 30th St. Station on Feb 1. The AEM-7 locomotive and the first two of six cars derailed at 1:40pm, blocking one track. There were no injuries.....

TEXAS' SESQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION in 1986 will have a special "Independence Express" train that will visit various parts of the state and bring exhibits of Texas history, if Texan supporters have their way. On Jan 7 a meeting to plan this was held in Austin. However, laments NARP Director-at-Large Dan Monaghan, the Southern Pacific went to the trouble of sending a vice president from San Francisco to the meeting for the express purpose of vocally opposing the train. He claimed that it would interfere seriously with SP's day to day freight operations. Says Monaghan, "The inability of the railroads to perform tasks such as the handling of special trains and passenger trains which were once operated routinely and without a second thought is simply another manifestation of the lowered productivity of our nation as it erodes from its former position of leadership and accomplishment".....

SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA carried five sleeping cars between Oakland and L.A. on Dec 30. This was because it used the COAST STARLIGHT's equipment, to which was added the SPIRIT's regular two sleepers. As told in RTN 236, the southbound STARLIGHT was turned into train 15 at Davis CA that date because it was so late after running a detour. At Oakland it became a 14-car train, with two engines, baggage, Heritage sleepers 2984 "Pine Cavern" and 2995 "Pine Brook", eight Superliner and Hi-level cars, then three Superliner sleepers.....

METRO DADE COUNTY, Florida buses started service to the front door of the Miami Amtrak depot on Dec 6. The route is the "L" line, and runs 5am to 2am the following day, 7 days a week, every 10-20mins. Service is direct to Miami Beach hotel row area, and convention hall. Fare is 75¢, 35¢ for seniors.....

SCL AND AMTRAK are in the final talking stages for a 403-b route between Miami and Tampa FL, with a bus connection Winter Haven-Disney World. One train a day each direction leaving Miami in the morning and Tampa in the p.m. The Florida DOT is optimistic that the legislature will come thru with funding for startup of the train this year.....

THE JAPANESE HIGH-SPEED train study is currently looking at the Los Angeles to San Diego line, and will next study the Miami-Orlando route. A businessman in Tampa has put up $500,000 in facilities for the study, which should start soon...

PALM BEACH SCHOOL PATROLS special trains, West Palm Beach-Washington, will run again this year. The all-Amfleet train will carry 800 kids each trip on the SILVER METEOR's route. Departure dates from Florida are Mar 4 and 11, and from Washington are Mar 7 and 14.....

GOLD COAST RAILROAD is seeking to move from Ft. Lauderdale FL to the new Miami Metro Zoo in South Dade County because of displacement by new Interstate highway construction. The move has the blessing of county and zoo officials.....

DOME CAR 9364, "Prairie View" is shown in this photo by Neil Lang sitting in the Los Angeles coach yards with most of the dome windows broken out. This is the sister car to 9363 "Lake View" which Amtrak recently sold to the SP (see RTN 237) so the railroad could use the 3-axle trucks to rebuild one of its business cars, scrapping the good body of the dome car. The Amtrak Board had to approve the sale, as it involved a policy departure--selling a car that was on a list of those to be kept. Observers believe that Amtrak should have sold this car instead of the one that was still useable. The trucks on both seemed to be okay.....

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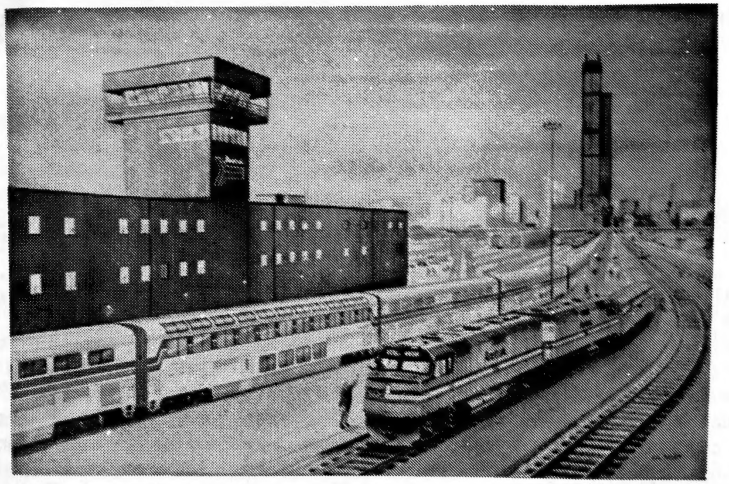
FRANCE'S TGV TRAIN has been so successful that Air Inter, France's domestic airline, has experienced "significant drops" in patronage on its competing Paris-Lyon route. The airline plans to cut fares in order to compete with the new high-speed train.....

"AMTRAK LOOKS GOOD" says reader Robert J. Swan upon returning from a European trip, on which he could compare the Continental trains to our domestic ones. "Amtrak has nothing to be ashamed of. Amtrak meal prices are reasonable. Amtrak has the overheating and underheating problem licked. Some Amtrak speeds soon will be meeting most European speeds".....

THE TIMETABLE COLLECTOR, quarterly issue dated Jan 15 carries an interesting feature: a reconstructed Chicago to upstate New York trip by interurban car that could have been made by a devoted railfan between 1910 and 1922. The trip would have used 16 different interurban routes and would have taken 3½ days, with 15 changes of car. Leaving Chicago at 7:45am Monday, the rider would reach Little Falls NY at 1pm on Thursday. The timetables and maps of the route are printed in the issue. Copies are available for $4 each from the non-profit National Ass'n of Timetable Collectors. Write: Timetable Collector, c/o Connecticut Direct Mail, 148 Washington Ave., North Haven CT 06473.....

A SPECIAL TRAIN was run by Union Pacific from Salt Lake City to L.A. the evening of Jan 28. Consist was GP 40X's 9005 & 9002, dorm-steam generator, 3 "Sun" series sleepers, diner, dome lounge 9005, and business car 110.....



AMTRAK'S 1982 CALENDAR, the painting on which is shown above, is available for $5 each, $9 for two, or $12 for 3, from: Amtrak Calendar, PO Box 311, Addison IL 60101. The painting, by noted rail artist Gil Reid, shows the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR and the BROADWAY LIMITED in front of the new Amtrak maintenance facility in Chicago. The calendar, less eye-catching than previous versions, has white lettering on a gray background. Amtrak's logo is missing from its usual prominent position under the painting, and appears instead in a microscopic placement at the lower right-hand corner. Size of the calendar is 24 by 33 inches, on heavier plastic-like stock than last year's.....

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THE COAST STARLIGHT is being re-routed for three days in February: the 3rd, 4th and 5th, via Marysville, missing Orland. This is being done as a test run to assess the running time before the permanent re-routing occurs, probably in April. Only one stop would be made on the February dates--Chico, for the benefit of Orland passengers. Amtrak is doing this in place of a special test train, which is more expensive.....

SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR rider in mid-January listened in on a radio conversation between the engineer of his westbound train and a dispatcher near Truckee. The engineer remarked that the two SP helper engines (#8554 and 9101) added at Sparks were "junk units" and were barely working, and they couldn't be used for dynamic braking. He asked the dispatcher to see if he could prevent them from being used again on Amtrak. The dispatcher replied that the same thing had happened the previous day.....

A TEST RUN between New Orleans and Baton Rouge with an Amtrak F-40 engine and car 10,000 is being planned.....

MORE DOME CAR NEWS: The following Amtrak domes in the Los Angeles yards were receiving a lot of work at the end of January: 9463, 9469, 9480, 9485, 9483, 9475, 9471 and 9454 "Silver Rifle". Washington reportedly told L.A. to get the cars in shape as soon as possible. Rumor was that the SP was considering buying some of them for their business specials. Also, some D&RGW people were reported looking at 9454 and 9471 for possible use on the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR, and other cars in the storage yard for use of their ski trains.....

SAN DIEGAN ROUTE gets a fare promotion Feb 1: roundtrip fare between any points on the L.A.-San Diego route is reduced 25%. The deal is applicable thru Apr 24, except for Apr 9, 10 and 11, and roundtrips must be completed within 30 days. Tickets purchased up to Apr 24 will be valid until May 23.....

AMTRAK BOARD MEETING of Jan 27 was held in Washington, and was the first meeting for new members Ralph Kerchum, Crete Harvey, Samuel Hellenbrand and Frank Jenkins. (Two more members are yet to be appointed by the White House, and they are expected to be Charles Luna, union leader, and Gov. Robert Orr of Indiana, representing a state with interests in Amtrak routes. In the interim, DOT representatives (listed last issue) are filling their slots.

At the meeting, the Board approved the Amtrak budget for fiscal year 1982. It totals $1,469,600,000. Revenues contribute an anticipated $633.9 million to the total. The rest will consist of $627.3 million in appropriations for operations, and $208.4 million in expenditures not requiring appropriations (interest deferral and other items). The revenue to cost ratio of this budget is 50.3%, a little better than the Congressionally mandated 50%. Amtrak's capital expenditures budget totals $102.3 million, and includes $87.7 million third-year outlay for Amfleet II cars, $12 million for AEM-7 locomotives, and $2.6 million for capital maintenance funds. The $2.6 million figure includes $300,000 for Los Angeles equipment washers, $400,000 for Grand Rapids train servicing facilities, $200,000 for fuel efficiency studies, money for conversion of four baggage-dorm cars to wheel carriers (so Amtrak can save $275,000 per year in highway charges for shipping wheels), and money for Hialeah and Wilmington pollution control. There is also $14.5 million in the budget for computer and other facilities. There is $700,000 for track upgrading to 79mph for Porter-Michigan City, $8.5 million for NE Corridor track, $3.5 million for Empire Service work, a sum for a joint project with the state of California on upgrading L.A.-San Diego track, $1.12 million for the Chicago Maintenance facility, funds for Harrisburg and Springfield main lines, and $800,000 for New Orleans Union Terminal.

The Board approved the trade of 9.9 acres of railway right of way in Providence RI to the city and to the Providence & Worcester Co. for 4.5 acres of property that would relocate the Amtrak line thru downtown Providence and put it 600 feet south of the state capitol building. Amtrak said it would eliminate 9° curves at the ends of the station, eliminate continuing repairs to the river bridge and future repairs to the viaduct at the station. The Rhode Island Association of RR Passengers opposes this move. RIARP and NARP believe the station relocation would reduce ridership potential.....

AMTRAK AS PRINTER: In the 1982 budget approved by the Amtrak Board is included $700,000 for high-speed presses so Amtrak can print its own timetables, saving $324,000 a year. Amtrak's schedules are now printed by the publishers of the Official Railway Guide.....

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AMTRAK'S ARROW COMPUTER is "functioning well", Amtrak President Alan Boyd told the Amtrak Board on Jan 27. He added, "I won't say quite well. We are debugging it on a day-to-day basis. It's not working anywhere near its capacity. It will take us several months to get there".....

MORE TIMETABLE ERRORS: On page 50 of the Oct 25-Apr 24 Amtrak system timetable, one of the bus schedules for Bend-Chemult, Oregon is wrong. The schedule leaving Bend at 7am should read "pm" for all the times--connecting with train 14. Incidentally, the buses will be discontinued Apr 1, running in the ski season only.....

THE NORTH STAR has been saved for a time by the Minnesota legislature, which recently approved $125,000 to continue funding the train beyond Jan 5. It's not known how much time that funding level will bring. Amtrak says it costs more to operate the train at this slack time of the year.....

THE SILVER STAR got its third HEP (electric-powered) consist on Jan 16 out of New York. It included 3 Heritage coaches on the Miami section and 2 Amfleet II coaches on the St. Petersburg section. Scheduled to go Amfleet II when there are enough cars are the SILVER STAR, SILVER METEOR, BROADWAY and LAKE SHORE. Scheduled for Heritage Fleet equipment are the CRESCENT, CARDINAL, CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, NIGHT OWL and PALMETTO.....

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION on Jan 5 decided that it could not grant the Soo Line an exemption that would permit it to discontinue its mixed train service in the state of Wisconsin.....

DAILY EXPRESS METROLINER roundtrips will increase from 3 to 4 on Feb 7, and Wilmington will be a stop for all of them..... NOT ONE TRAIN was annulled due to weather in the recent 25 below freeze in Chicago.....

News in this issue is updated thru Feb 1, 1982.

CARS & CONSISTS

*SAN DIEGAN, train 578, San Diego Jan 22: engine 221; cars Amcoaches 21268, 21181, Amcafe 20052, Amcoaches 21258, 21216, 21259. Train 581, same: engine 223; cars Amcoaches 21185, 21187, Amcafe 20040, Amcoaches 21264, 21254. Same, train 576, Jan 23: engine 224; cars Amcoaches 21267, 21260, Amcafe 20043, Amcoaches 21265, 21249. Same, train 579: engine 230; cars 1376 baggage, Amcoaches 21182, 21270, Amcafe 20041, Amcoaches 21253, 21231.

*SILVER METEOR, train 87, NY-Miami Dec 24, 1981: engine 970 (NY-Wash.), 382 & 378 (Wash.-Jax); cars 1755 mail, 1618 bag-dorm, coaches 4617, 4644, 4637, 4017, 4008, 8528 diner, 3120 cafeteria-lounge, coaches 4012, 4018, 4642, 4020, 2462 "Silver Chasm", 2455 "Elm Grove", 2476 "Sarasota", 2093 "Loch Katrine", deadhead diner 8507.

*SILVER STAR, train 82, Jacksonville Dec 27: engines 390, 376; cars 1233, 1630, 2456 "Willow Grove", 2460 "Pine Island", Amfleet II cars 25008, 25009, 25000, 25002, diner 8519, cafeteria-lounge 3117, Amfleet II 25001, 25007, 25004, 25006, 2476 sleeper. Same, train 92, Miami-Auburndale Jan 2: engine 629 (SDP); cars 1253, 1425, 2851 "Enoree River", 2531 "Cardinal", 5684, 5477, 5429, 5426, 5691, 8017 diner, (on at Auburndale:) 3320 lounge, 4466, 5422, 5480, 5421, 5457, 2797 "Middle River."

*CAPITOL LIMITED, train 441, McKeesport PA Jan 21: engine 270; cars 1162, 1245, 2881, 21239, 4618, 3103.

*BROADWAY LIMITED, train 41, Philadelphia Dec 30: engine 915 (AEM-7, NY-Phil); cars 21070 deadhead to Altoona, 1612, 2892, 2980, 2081, 4712, 4720, 4708, Amfleet II 25013, 8124, 8518, 1226, 1224; engines 346 & 352 (F-40s, Phila-Chicago).

RAIL FANTRIPS

Feb 27: NARP Region XII annual meeting, 9:30am, combined with Citizens for Rail California annual rail conference Feb 26-28. Mansion Inn Hotel, 16th & H Sts, Sacramento CA. Info: R. Glover 415-824-4819; E. Von Nordeck 714-684-7458.

Apr 3: "State of Maine" Express, Boston-Worcester-Portland-Boston via B&M; on Stony Brook, Lowell Jct & Wilmington Jct Branches, over 125 mis frt-only line. Write for info: Mass. Bay RR Enthusiasts Inc., Box 136, Ward Hill MA 01830.

Apr 24: Excursion on Maryland & Delaware RR, Clayton DE to Easton MD & return, using Alco RS-1. Charter bus avail from Wilmington, lv about 8am. Write for info: Wilmington Chapter, NRHS, PO Box 1261, Wilmington DE 19899.

May 8-27: 1982 China Adventure (3rd tour), limit 20. CP Air from West Coast to Vancouver, overnite, CP Air to Tokyo, fly to Beijing; train to Great Wall, etc. All meals incl. Great Western Tours, Box 77234, San Francisco CA 94107.

May 21-May 24 and Jun 4-Jun 7: Sacramento River train & boat excursions from L.A. SPRIIT OF CALIF. to Oakland, river boat to Sacramento, overnite, visit rail museum. Pacific RR Society, Box 2768, Riverside CA 92516. 714-684-7458 afternoons.

One Rail Fantrips listing is free. Send full info to:
RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Fantrips Dept, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"To the train buff, the airplane symbolizes all that is wrong with modern life. Planes have speed but no character, like new hotels, digital clocks and artificial turf. Trains are for people who prefer taste to efficiency. Amtrak knows that, but cooking "real" food was costing $53 million a year, mostly in wages. Heating up frozen glop in microwaves like the airlines do require fewer workers. Congress ordered Amtrak to save the food money, and the rail agency complied. In the long run, it was probably a mistake. The worst thing that could happen to the trains is for them to start being sensible."

--Jon Margolis in Chicago Tribune, Dec 27.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"Aside from his eminence as a beer salesman on TV commercials, Madden is probably the most acclaimed train rider in the land because he stopped flying when he quit coaching and he makes long train trips to get to his assignment. For the Super Bowl, he left his home near Oakland last Friday on the California Zephyr, switched trains in Chicago and arrived in Detroit Sunday."

--Stan Isaacs in Newsday, Jan 24.

(Don't believe everything you read in the paper.)

THE PANIC BOX

(continued from page 10)

A SILVER METEOR (train 87) passenger had his left knee injured when the seat in front of him gave way under another passenger's weight.

The EMPIRE BUILDER, train 7 of Jan 5, had car 38031 frozen and car 32056 without heat.

On Thursday, Jan 7 places such as Chicago and Minneapolis were reported below zero temperatures. Amtrak was glad it wasn't running steam-heated cars there anymore. At Shelby MT a BN freight derailed an engine, blocking both main tracks. The EMPIRE BUILDER, train 8 of Jan 6, was delayed 149mins, and it left Shelby 201mins late.

Another BN freight derailed one car 43 miles east of Everett WA, blocking the single track. The EMPIRE BUILDER, #7 of Jan 5, was delayed 30mins.

The two BROADWAY LIMITEDS today had to detour between Pittsburgh and Chicago, with 3hrs delay, due to a big Conrail freight derailment just east of Crestline.

On Jan 8 and 9 old man winter was giving Amtrak's equipment a severe test. And it was going thru, tho delayed at times. (In Minneapolis it was hitting 25 blow zero, 17 below in Chicago.) The SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR that left Chicago Jan 7 was 313mins late by the time it reached Reno. Between Ogden and Reno it lost 236mins due to 40mph speed restrictions in severe weather, and 40mins more due to slow track. The eastbound train that left Oakland Jan 8 lost 70mins in the same area due to CTC failure, 180mins due to 40mph restrictions, 45mins due to broken rails, and 30mins due to slow track. These conditions were expected to continue thru the weekend. The westbound train that left Chicago Jan 9 was held at Creston IA behind a BN freight derailment. Highways in Iowa are closed due to extreme cold and high winds causing snow drifts. The wind chill factor was 75 below zero. The derailment and the weather put the SFZ 7 hours late.

The MOUNT RAINIER was hit by a mud and snow slide at Nisqually WA at 7pm. Engine 228 had minor damage, and there were no injuries. The train was delayed only 10mins (on Jan 9).

The NORTH STAR, train 9, was only 20mins late leaving Minneapolis, despite a wind chill factor of 60 below, and frozen doors that had to be thawed. (Jan 9)

TRAIN POWER A new book by Ralph Creger and Barry Combs

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—Passenger Train Journal

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—Rail Travel News

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SCANNER ENTHUSIASTS.. Bearcat model 100 hand-held SYNTHESIZED scanner now ready. No crystals required to receive any RAIL-police-fire frequency. Low and highbank VHF, UHF. Complete with carry case, battery charger/AC adapter, earplug & antenna. $379.00 shipped UPS. Calif. residents add $22.74 sales tax. Ed Von Nordeck, P O Box 2768, Riverside CA 92516. 714-781-2930.

ANNOUNCING THE 1982 CITIZENS FOR RAIL CALIFORNIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE in Sacramento Feb. 26-28. Amtrak, Caltrans, discussion sessions on various rail passenger topics. Information from CRC, 2938 Loyola Dr, Davis CA 95616. Come learn about the California phenomenon: add service while the nation cuts back.

EURAIL PASS PRICES FOR 1982: 15 day $250; 21 day $320; 1 month $390; 2 months $530; 3 months $650. YOUTH EURAIL PASS: 1 month $260; 2 months $350. Pass is good for use 6 months from purchase date. Please make check to Accent on Travel, 1030 Curtis St, Menlo Park CA 94025. Include passport number & date of birth.

AMTRAK Transcontinental Circle fares Jan 15 thru Apr 24. 14 or 30-day tickets offering circle fares in the West or combined with West and Eastern trains. Good in sleepers, stopovers may be made, Family Plan and senior discount apply. Ask us for details: LET'S TRAVEL TOURS, P O Box 2768, Riverside CA 92516. Phone 714-781-2930 or 787-8350. Rail travel experts since 1951.

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RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads $1 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads: only $1.25 per square inch. RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

AMTRAK RIDERSHIP FIGURES

SEPTEMBER 1981 FIGURES--SECOND COLUMN IS % INCREASE/(DECREASE) OVER 1980

METROLINERS	95,961	(25.1)
NORTHEAST CORRIDOR CONVENTIONAL	456,112	(7.8)
PHIL-NEW HAVEN-SPRINGFIELD	19,217	.1
NEW YORK-PHILADELPHIA	177,465	(7.5)
PHILADELPHIA-HARRISBURG	69,503	(9.1)
NEW YORK-HARRISBURG	23,348	(9.8)
TOTAL NORTHEAST CORRIDOR	841,606	(10.1)
NEW YORK-NIAGARA FALLS	57,895	3.0
CHICAGO-ST.LOUIS	18,829	(11.1)
CHICAGO-MILWAUKEE	18,417	(17.2)
CHICAGO-DETROIT/TOLEDO	28,356	(17.0)
CHICAGO-CARBONDALE	12,826	3.2
CHICAGO-QUINCY	5,546	(28.2)
LOS ANGELES-SAN DIEGO	88,942	(10.3)
SEATTLE-EUGENE	7,758	(22.6)
VANCOUVER-SEATTLE	11,139	97.3
WASHINGTON-CINCINNATI	12,275	12.7
WASHINGTON-MARTINSBURG	22,430	1.9
OAKLAND-BAKERSFIELD	13,532	35.9
NEW YORK-MONTREAL	6,712	13.2
CHICAGO-PORT HURON	6,676	(11.1)
CHICAGO-DUBUQUE	4,435	66.4
CHICAGO-DULUTH	8,776	38.8
CHICAGO-VALPARAISO	17,899	(2.5)
CHICAGO-INDIANAPOLIS	5,146	.0
CHICAGO-PEORIA	2,765	(6.4)
CHICAGO-KANSAS CITY	6,779	85.0
PHILADELPHIA-PITTSBURGH	7,993	62.6
PORTLAND-EUGENE	2,783	(35.2)
CHICAGO-MINNEAPOLIS	4,054	(8.8)
TOTAL SHORT DISTANCE	371,963	(.2)
WASHINGTON-MONTREAL	11,291	(12.6)
NEW YORK-FLORIDA	42,995	(3.5)
CHICAGO-NEW YORK/WASHINGTON	20,705	(7.4)
CHICAGO-CINCINNATI-WASHINGTON	15,590	55.8
CHICAGO-SEATTLE (N)	21,618	6.0
CHICAGO-SAN FRANCISCO	26,139	.1
CHICAGO-LOS ANGELES	23,665	6.1
CHICAGO-NEW ORLEANS	14,630	(6.1)
CHICAGO-TEXAS	12,328	55.9
LOS ANGELES-NEW ORLEANS	6,995	15.7
LOS ANGELES-SEATTLE	45,896	5.9
CHICAGO-NEW YORK/BOSTON	26,857	(1.1)
BOSTON-NEWPORT NEWS	4,802	(25.7)
NEW YORK-SAVANNAH	11,550	(8.0)
SEATTLE-SALT LAKE CTY/CHI	15,225	35.2
NEW YORK-NEW ORLEANS	20,144	16.3
LOS ANGELES/OGDEN-CHI	12,306	9.1
TOTAL LONG DISTANCE	332,736	4.8
SPECIAL TRAINS	13,472	1022.7
SYSTEM TOTAL	1,559,777	(4.2)

Here are the most recently released ridership figures from Amtrak, for September, 1981, the last month of Fiscal Year 1981. The August figures appeared in RTN 236.

September patronage was once again off from 1980 levels, but improved in that respect from the performance of August. Systemwide, patronage was down 4.2% from Sep 1980, and again this was due primarily to weak patronage in the Northeast Corridor, which, however, was down only 10.1% in Sep, better than the 24.1% drop in August. Short distance performance was mixed, with some trains increasing and some decreasing, for an overall insignificant drop of 0.2%. Long distance trains continued their strong performance, with an increase of 4.8%.

For the fiscal year as a whole, ridership on the system was down 2.9%, with NE Corridor patronage down 9.8%, short distance up 6.8%, and long distance up 5.0%. Total system patronage was 20,609,944, compared to 21,219,419 in Fiscal Year 1980.

Amtrak said that the weak patronage in the NE Corridor was due to a recessionary decline in business travel and to competition from cutrate air fares.

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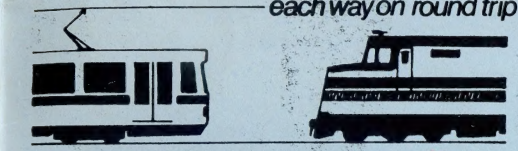

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